



WFCA

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November 27, 2006

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Room 8-B201
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Petition RM-11348

Dear Chairman Martin:

As the President of the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA), a division of the International Fire Chiefs Association, I am writing on behalf of our members from Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington, to express support for the concepts outlined with in petition #RM-11348.

Years after terror incidents in Oklahoma City and New York City as well as in the aftermath of recent natural disasters such as hurricane Katrina and the Hawaiian earthquake, we have not seen the improvements in communications called for by the lessons learned from those incidents. First responders still are unable to communicate readily and effectively when responding together to major incidents. Unfortunately, our nation's first responders continue to rely upon antiquated technology, expensive equipment and stove-piped systems throughout the country because our access to more advanced systems is limited.

With practically every public safety entity looking for better ways to communicate and each state working on statewide interoperability initiatives, the time is now to dedicate a contiguous 30 MHz block of frequencies in the upper 700 MHz band to provide just the sort of access to an advanced, nationwide communications network that we know we need, while also harnessing the economic benefits of a shared public/private partnership with commercial wireless operators. The central principles of RM-11348 include (1) reallocating the 30 MHz block of frequencies from the planned auction of 700 MHz spectrum to public safety; (2) licensing the 30 MHz of spectrum to a Public Safety Broadband Trust that would control and manage the spectrum, (3) designing a next-generation IP-based nationwide network with extensive terrestrial coverage and satellite capabilities – all built to public safety specifications, (4) using private capital to fund a public/private shared network, and (5) enabling commercial operators to use excess capacity on the network, but giving public safety priority access. This proposal is innovative and, for the first time, cohesively resolves the multitude of problems contributing to public safety's communications problems by joining public and private interests.

On behalf of the WFCA and our ten-state membership, I urge the FCC Commissioners, Congressional Representatives, and other decision-makers in Washington, DC, to fulfill their obligation to act in the public interest. Time is of the essence and if action is not taken quickly, the frequencies will be auctioned in late 2007 or early 2008 for commercial purposes and this opportunity will be lost forever. We recognize Congressional action is necessary to ensure that this spectrum is assigned to the Public Safety Broadband Trust to be used for primary, interoperable public safety operations and not auctioned for purely commercial use. By this letter, we urge the Members of Congress representing the ten most western states to sponsor and support this innovative approach to meeting critical public safety communications needs and to act swiftly in support of it.

Sincerely,

Chief Jeffrey D. Johnson, President
Western Fire Chiefs Association

Copies to: Members of Congress